**Acceptance of Tonnage Tax regime**

1582. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of SHIPPINp be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry of Disinvestment has joined hands with his Ministry to press for the acceptance of the Tonnage Tax regime as it would improve the sell-off price of PSUs in the sector; and

(b) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) and (b) The Government while approving the disinvestment of Shipping Corporation of India Ltd. (SCI) has also approved that improvement in taxation and shipping sector policies that would encourage Shipping Companies to operate under Indian flag to be taken up simultaneously by the Ministry of Shipping. Accordingly, the matter is being pursued with Ministry of Finance for acceptance of recommendations of Rakesh Mohan Committee Report to the effect that Shipping Companies should be given the option of tonnage tax.

**Repayment of Loan by SCI**

1583. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Shipping Corporation of India has decided to pay back Rs. 260 crore loan taken from Government;

(b) if so, whether the SCI Board of Directors cleared the proposal in the month of January, 2002 and have sounded his Ministry on the move;

(c) whether Government have agreed to reimburse the extra amount above the market rate that SCI had to pay so that the strategic public sector company could hold its own against its competitors; and

(d) if so, to what extent these decisions have helped the SCI?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) The proposal is still under examination in consultation with Ministry of Finance.

**Efficiency and revenue of major ports in Tamil Nadu**

1584. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether any specific effort has been taken to increase the efficiency and revenue of the major ports of the country in general and Tamil Nadu, in particular; and

(b)- if so, the details thereof with particular reference to Tamil Nadu ports, port-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) To increase efficiency and capacity of major ports and consequential their revenue, the following major steps have been taken from time to time in relation to all major ports of the country including the major ports situated in the State of Tamil Nadu:—

(i) Construction and equipping of new berths/terminals;

(ii) Replacement of existing equipment with the state-of-art equipment on existing berths;

(iii) Labour training and improvement in management practices for achieving higher efficiency/output;

(iv) Private sector involvement in the development and operation of part facilities to bring out additional investment and modern techniques for greater efficiency;

(v) Computerisation of port working and partial induction of Electronic Data Interchange; and

(vi) Setting up of Vessel Traffic Management System inputs have improved safety of the ships.